

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process between at least one gaseous and at least one liquid stream, of which at least one comprises (meth)acrylic monomers, in a separating column containing separating internals, at least some of the separating internals being a sequence of sieve trays, ~~which comprises selecting wherein the~~ improvement comprises:

adjusting the streams in such a way so that at least some of the sieve trays are operated above an entrainment fraction of 10% by weight.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are exclusively mass transfer trays at least some of which being a sequence of sieve trays.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are, from bottom to top, dual-flow trays trickle sieve trays, hydraulically sealed crossflow trays and valve trays.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the separating internals contained in the separating column are exclusively ~~dual-flow trays~~ trickle sieve trays.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims 1 to 4 1 or 2, which is a process for fractional condensation, for rectification or for absorption.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 5~~ 1 or 2, wherein at least some of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 70% by weight.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 6~~ 1 or 2, wherein at least some of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 30% by weight.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 6~~ 1 or 2, wherein all of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 70% by weight.

Claim 9 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 7~~ 1 or 2, wherein all of the sieve trays are operated at an entrainment fraction of from 11 to 30% by weight.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 9~~ 1 or 2, wherein the liquid stream comprises polymerization inhibitors.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): A thermal separating process as claimed in ~~any of~~ claims ~~1 to 10~~ 1 or 2, which is a process for fractionally condensing the product gas mixture of a catalytic gas phase oxidation of C3 precursor compounds to acrylic acid for preparing acrylic acid.

DISCUSSION OF AMENDMENT

Claims 1-3 and 5-11 are amended.

Claim 1 is rewritten in Jepson format (see 37 C.F.R. §1.75(e)).

The amendments to Claims 1-3 and 5-11 serve to improve readability, and are supported in the original disclosure.

The amendments of Claims 3-4 changing "dual-flow trays" to read "trickle sieve tray" is supported on page 4, line 18 of the specification text.

No new matter is believed to be added upon entry of the amendment.

Upon entry of the amendment, Claims 1-11 will be pending.